

DCUSA Issues Form (DIF)

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Issue Title:	DNO Work Upon Meter Terminals, Meter Tails And Customer Tails Following Work Upon Or Change Of DNO Service Equipment.
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Attachments:	

**Assigned by DCUSA Secretariat*

Originator details	
Party Name	UK Power Networks
Originator Name	Matthew Hays Stimson
Party Category	Distributor
Email Address	matthew.hays-stimson@ukpowernetworks.co.uk
Telephone Number	01293 657941

Nature of Issue

An outcome of the RIMISSE¹ court case is an elevated concern over liability due to acts or omissions which might lead to elevated fire risk at the service termination / metering position.

When a DNO needs to replace its service cut-out it is likely, despite best endeavours, that the meter tails and possibly the customer tails will be disturbed to some extent and the quality of the electrical connection within the metering terminals may be affected. Without retightening of all of the metering terminals, preferably immediate retightening by the DNO operative on site, some elevated risk may exist. On a precautionary basis we consider that improved solutions are required that enable the DNO to discharge its statutory and licence duties in replacing and maintaining its systems in the safest manner efficiently and practically possible.

The matter of access to the metering terminals is further complicated by 'key' secured front terminal covers on Smart Meters, keys which DNOs are currently not in possession of nor likely to be given previous clarifications that Suppliers did not support DNO work upon metering systems.

Previous DCUSA Change Proposals were proposed to formalise DNO work upon metering systems, most specifically to conduct urgent metering services and for the DNO to conduct the moving of meters coincident with relocation of the DNO service termination. Whilst these topics differ in their extent from the matter to be discussed, some of the feedback from these earlier change proposals indicated a general unease amongst Suppliers with DNO staff working upon metering systems, typically whole current domestic and small commercial LV whole current metering systems.

We require discussion with DCUSA Parties to ascertain their preferred route to establish the retightening of the metering terminals to ensure the continued safety and integrity of the distributor/meter operator asset chain. The DNO for its safety reasons must replace its service termination equipment so as to comply with its general obligations in law and this need cannot be restricted. Therefore an effective arrangement for the management of risks arising from disturbance of the meter tails and customer tails termination into the metering terminals is required.

We foresee four basic options of which there may be permutations, certainly each having differing consequences for the Supplier and Supplier's meter operator in addition to consequences for the DNO.

1. **DNO retightening prior to re-energisation**

DNOs to be consented through a DCUSA Change Proposal to work upon metering systems consequent to modification/replacement of the DNO service equipment, to retighten metering terminals and/or remake meter tail or customer tails, as appropriate, to ensure the safety of the supply equipment. This option would necessitate the provision of Smart Meter keys to the DNOs. This option would ensure that terminals were retightened prior to re-energising the supply and would present the very lowest risk possible with minimum co-ordination.

2. **Supplier retightening on second subsequent visit some time after DNO re-energisation**

A means by which the Supplier will ensure that within a short mandatory timescale that the Supplier's agent will later attend site to retighten the metering terminals, in this scenario the provision of Smart Meter keys to DNOs is not required. This would leave the metering terminals untightened, for a period not under the control of the DNO, and clearly some liability would rest upon the Supplier if retightening of terminals was not conducted expeditiously were an incident caused by untightened metering terminals to occur. This we feel presents a higher risk as retightening in all cases will not occur before re-energisation by the DNO.

3. **Supplier retightening on pre-scheduled co-attendance visit prior to re-energisation**

A means by which the Supplier's agent will attend within a short timescale on a pre-scheduled basis or short notice unscheduled basis at the same time as the DNO such that the Supplier's agent conducts all the retightening of metering terminals. We consider that in the case of Category A and possibly Category B conditions of cut-out or service equipment that there may be no time available in advance to agree a future joint-attendance visit. We consider that the ability of a Supplier's agent and DNO operative to commit and achieve attendance on site within the same time period within the day may be challenging to both parties and not practical to achieve in all cases, placing some liability on the DNO if it fails to replace its equipment or retighten the metering terminals and some liability on the Supplier for failing to retighten the metering terminals in an expeditious fashion. This we feel presents a higher risk as retightening might not occur before re-energisation by the DNO in all cases.

4. **DNO to leave de-energised until subsequent visit by Meter Operator who re-energises**

A means by which the Supplier will ensure that the Supplier's agent will later attend site to retighten the metering terminals and re-energise the supply. This has an adverse impact on the customer.

Solution Overview – if known

Solution description:	We currently have no view on a preferred solution due to the complexities of liabilities and preferences of Suppliers yet to be ascertained. It may be necessary to also consider a broader scope of works such as replacement of customer meter boards and who removes and refits meters to the new meter board and the consequential retightening of both cut-out and all metering terminals.
Lead time for Implementation:	We currently have no view on lead-time at this time. Whilst seemingly a simple topic it has the potential to require considerable drafting and consultation activity given the consequences of tightening or absence of retightening at different time periods by either party following necessary works by the DNO.

¹ The High Court decision dated 17th September 2012 on Case Nos: HT-10-95, HT-10-210, HT-10-??, HT-10-427 and HT-11-163 in respect of "Repair, Installation, Maintenance and Inspection of Supply Side Equipment", Neutral Citation Number: [2012] EWHC 2541 (TCC)